

Islamic Art Louvre

Paris Art Studies – A historical outline of Islamic civilization

622 –
Mohamed’s exile from Mecca to Medina marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar (the Hegira).

632 –
Year of Mohamed’s death. The new religion has triumphed in a unified Arabia.

632-660 – Four elected successors undertake the conquest of vast territories belonging to the Persian and Byzantine empires spreading the Muslim faith. The 2nd half of the 7th century Arab unity is undermined by schism and civil war between Shiites and Sunnis.

661 – The Umayyad family from Mecca create a hereditary dynasty, a Caliphate (lasting until 750) with its new capital outside Arabia in Damascus. The Muslim empire achieves its greatest expansion from Narbonne in France to Samarkand in central Asia and Multan in Pakistan.

762 – The Abbasids overthrow the Umayyads and establish a new capital in Bagdad in the territories of the former Persian Empire. Iranians achieve a decisive position in the administration and culture of the empire.

929 – Central authority crumbles on the edges of the empire with the establishment of independent caliphates in Spain, the Maghreb (western North Africa) and central Asia.

969 – A new Shiite caliphate from Tunisia seizes Egypt and Arabia and founds a new capital in Egypt, Cairo.

1031 – The collapse of the Cordova caliphate in Spain signals the beginning of the Christian “reconquista” with the taking of Toledo.

1055 – An aggressive tribe from Central Asia, the Turks capture Bagdad. The new strongman is no longer the Caliph but the Turkish Sultan. The Sultan’s authority extends from Central Asia to Syria. He combats Shiism and promotes Sunnism. The Turks conquer Byzantine Anatolia and spread the Muslim faith to India where they establish the Delhi sultanate.

1085 – Spain and the Maghreb are united under successive Berber dynasties based in Marrakesh.

1099 – The Crusaders capture Jerusalem.

1171 – The military ruler Saladin captures Cairo putting an end to the Shiite caliphate.

1187 – Saladin recaptures Jerusalem. His family will henceforth rule Egypt and Syria from Cairo.

1200 – Seville and Cordova are lost to the Christians.

1250 – The Mamluks, originally soldier slaves recruited in the Caucasus and Central Asia by the rulers of Egypt take over Cairo establishing a durable regime (until 1517). Cairo becomes the largest city of the Muslim world.

1258 – Genghis Khan leads the Mongols to an invasion of the Near East. Baghdad is captured and its Abbasid rulers and population slaughtered.

1260 – The Mamluks successfully repel the Mongol invaders. The Muslim world is divided into a Persian speaking entity in the East and an Arab one in North Africa, Syria and Arabia.

1330 – The heir to Mongol power is Timur (Tamerlane), another fearsome invader. His successors, however, were enlightened patrons of the arts and sciences and dominated the 15th century Iranian world.

1347 – The Muslim world and Europe are ravaged by the plague. Blossoming of the mystical cult of Sufism which appeals most particularly to the Turko-Mongol elites. In the 14th century the sultans of Delhi extend their rule over two thirds of India and the Turks seize the Balkans in Europe.

1453 – Fall of Constantinople which becomes the new capital of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. In the following century the Ottomans extend their Empire into Hungary and the Danube provinces , Crimea, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and the Maghreb to the borders of Morocco.

1492 – The fall of Granada spells the end of Muslim Spain. The Muslim world, however, reaches its apogee encompassing 30% of the world population.

1501 – The Safavid dynasty conquers Iran and imposes Shiism as the state religion.

1526 – The Mughal dynasty unites Islamic India.

1683 – The defeat of the Ottomans at the siege of Vienna spells the beginning of the decline of Ottoman power.

1798 – Bonaparte invades Egypt signaling the beginning of European intervention in the Middle East.

1799 – The British take over India after their victory at Seringapatam.

1821 – Beginning of the Greek war of independence. The establishment of an independent Greek state in 1830 signals the beginning of the decline of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans.

1830 – France conquers Algeria.

1881-85 – Russian annexation of Muslim Central Asia north of Iran.

1882 – Egypt becomes a British protectorate.

1913
– Turkey loses its last provinces in Europe except for Istanbul and Thrace.

1920
– Dismantling of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. Only Turkey, Persia and Saudi Arabia survive as diminished independent states. The rest of the Muslim world is entirely under European colonial administration or occupation.